Should I Keep Working With MS?

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Working With MS: A Life Upheaved

Being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) is a very tumultuous event for a person to endure. Life becomes upheaved and decisions must be made for future life planning in order to continue to live a prosperous and happy life.

Having a job, for most people, is an essential tool for ensuring a stable and thriving life. Many people with MS feel an enormous amount of stress and insecurity when they think about their career futures.

Will I still be able to work and contribute in an unfettered way? How will I remain financially secure if I cannot handle being out of my home for 40 hours a week? What happens when I have an MS flare up?

The questions and uncertainties add up quickly. As a result, many people can get too caught up in trying to maintain a status quo and end up leaving the job market prematurely.

There are significant things to think deeply about and decide upon. Fortunately, progressive employment laws, technology, and job flexibility have really helped many people remain in the workforce for many, many years.

Yes, you can have a career to be proud of after you are diagnosed with MS!

Protecting Your Interests and Mitigating Possible Future Losses

Firstly, it is important you understand the law is on your side. The Americans with Disabilities Act is multifaceted and helps you to stay gainfully employed!

Secondly, and I am pulling from my own personal experience now, it is important to try to mitigate your losses by imagining your worst-case physical scenario and then reverse engineering a career that might fit into that circumstance.

Is it necessary to upheave the status quo in the best interest of preserving some kind of future apocalyptic personal scenario? No, not necessarily. I just like to approach my MS with the school of thought that luck favors the prepared.

Personally, I believe that the medical strides that are being made in regards to MS are coming mind-bogglingly fast. I also believe that technology is changing our working world so quickly that our opportunities and happiness with MS is completely different than it was in the nine years since I have been diagnosed.

The changes are going to continue to arrive and I welcome them all. I am just not capable of seeing what changes will be coming when, so I plan.

What Are Your Options?

The first and most comprehensive employment path I see for people with MS is any job that is part of the 'thinking economy.' Many tech jobs, including computer programming, data analysis, quality analysis, project management, and program management, are a part of this.

These are great jobs that pay great salaries and can be worked either in the office or via telecommute.

Technology has brought many jobs out of the traditional office setting and into the comfort of your own home office. Many employers with traditional office positions are happily willing to consider telecommute as an option.

This is a powerful and progressive benefit that many companies are recognizing for viable employee recruitment and retention. Do not overlook this as a route to happy employment.

Other great careers to consider would be those that enable you to be self-employed. Being a lawyer, insurance or real estate agent, for example, would enable you to create a flexible schedule for yourself and while maintaining your edge in the marketplace.

Next page: seeking out supportive employers and co-workers.

What Are Your Options?

The career choices at your disposal are endless. It is still possible to have a career that is more physical in nature, like nursing, law enforcement, etc. It will be important to keep in mind that you might not have the ability to perform the same duties for your entire career.

It will be important to seek out ways to change your duties with your abilities if your MS progresses in ways that impede upon your work life.

The main idea to remember is to brainstorm the possibilities and seek out creative ways towards finding your most fulfilling and prosperous path. Find career that makes you happy, flexible and resilient to the changes that MS might want to make in your life.

Seek out Supportive Employers and Co-Workers

Another facet of work that can be of some difficulty is dealing with your employer or your co-workers. Yes, the law is on your side, but not everyone will be understanding and fair. Also, unscrupulous employers can be sneaky and find ways of squeezing you out.

It is important to seek out employers you can trust, the ones that make it a point to treat their employees with dignity and respect. Yes, this can be easier said than done, but if you make this a priority early after your diagnosis then you will be better set in the long run. Try using the MS spoon theory to explain yourself.

What If You Don't Have the Skills to Change Your Career?

It is hard to look at your future and think about job training when you have MS, because MS doesn't allow you to see where you are going to physically be in a couple of years. I have been struggling with this battle for years now.

When I was diagnosed with MS, I was two months away from finishing my second bachelor's degree and already applying for master's degree programs all over the country. My fear made me falter.

I allowed my fear to dictate my decisions and I decided that my family could not afford more college debt to go

alongside my medical debt.

Today, I can see how foolish I was. I wasted nine years of my working life on the belief that chasing a career was not worth my while. I am ashamed that I had so little faith in my body, in myself.

My hope is that even one of you will learn from my mistake. The truth is, I have value as a working adult. I should have been working or going to school for every year since my diagnosis. I have not.

I have been fortunate to have a husband who has a great job that has provided well for us. But I do recognize that my family would be in an even better financial place if I had continued my career plans.

It took me many lost years to truly understand my capabilities. I am finally in my master's program at Boston University now. I am on track to graduate in the spring of 2018.

My best advice is for people to look at their career prospects in a positive light. See the strengths that you have and support them as best as you can. Prepare for the worst-case scenario, but plan for a happy life — a happy future.